

SUSTAINABLE TRIBAL WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS –

Evaluation of Key Indicators

Tribal Evaluation Concept –

Sustainable waste management systems tend to share key attributes in seven areas:

1. planning,
2. financial viability,
3. management,
4. staffing,
5. operations,
6. coordination, and
7. compliance/enforcement.

EPA has developed an evaluation tool focused on tribal waste systems that will allow tribal managers to self-evaluate, or agree to a third-party evaluation of the sustainability of their waste management programs in these areas. Results of the evaluation can be used to diagnose and target areas to strengthen, assess improvements over time, and aid in funding decisions.

Tribal Evaluation Questionnaire –

Key indicators of sustainability have been developed for each of the seven areas identified above (see Attachment 1). The evaluation tool includes a series of questions to evaluate the effectiveness of a tribal system in each of these key indicator areas. Questions can be answered “no” (0 points), “yes, but inadequate” (1 point), “yes, adequate/effective” (2 points), or “not applicable” for a possible total of 206 points (minus 2 times the number of non-applicable questions).

The tribe may choose to self-evaluate in order to identify areas needing improvement or to document improvements over time through an improved evaluation score. Self-evaluation may precede evaluation by a third-party, such as a circuit rider or federal agency, at the invitation of a tribe. The tribe’s evaluation result may be kept within the tribe or the tribe may share it with funding agencies in order to demonstrate the need for assistance or to document success.

Potential benefits of the evaluation tool to tribes—

Completing an evaluation of the sustainability of a waste management system may help a tribe attract funding or technical assistance, demonstrate the effectiveness of previous assistance, or help ensure that unnecessary costs are avoided and projects are capably managed. The results will allow a tribe to identify its strengths and weaknesses in key areas and make improvements in order to provide the best possible service while protecting public health and the environment.

Attachment 1

Key indicators of sustainability in tribal waste management systems —

Planning key indicators

- An integrated waste management plan is in place (with good information on demand for services and changes over time).
- A capital improvements plan is in place.
- Operation and maintenance plans are in place.
- Waste management plans are integrated with other tribal plans (such as housing plans).
- Plans take into account the impact of future development on the waste management program or utility.
- Plans are being used for decision-making.
- Plans are revisited and updated on a regular basis.

Financial viability key indicators

- The waste management program has an annual operating budget (with contingencies and equipment costs built in).
- User fees and other income sources are adequate to cover costs.
- Reliable federal or other non-tribal sources are available to help fill necessary gaps in funding.
- Billing and collection are adequate to generate revenue needed.
- The waste management program has control over its own financial management.
- Rates are fair and affordable and updated as needed.
- Equitable provisions are made for people who can't afford to pay and the lost revenue is provided to the waste management program or utility from another source.

Management key indicators

- The management structure is effective and clearly identified, preferably with a utility and/or program manager position.
- The waste program manager has authority to hire, and direct waste management staff as well as evaluate performance and take corrective actions when necessary.
- A utility board (or other authority independent of council) has power to make decisions.

Staffing key indicators

- A staffing plan is in place with clear position descriptions and hiring policies.
- A staff training plan is developed and followed.
- The workforce is stable.
- Staffing is appropriate (both in terms of number and skill mix) to meet program needs.
- Outside assistance is obtained as needed.

Operations key indicators

- Activities comply with laws and regulations
- Operations are cost-effective and meet demand (no gaps in service occur).
- Waste minimization and pollution prevention are incorporated to the extent feasible.
- Operations are regularly evaluated and improved as needed.

Coordination key indicators

- There is good coordination with council and other tribal departments that manage or generate waste (e.g., health, housing, BIA, legal, casinos, etc.).
- Effective outreach is made to stakeholders regarding rates, services, billing and collection policies, etc. and stakeholders support the program.
- The tribe coordinates with other jurisdictions for service (such as county, private haulers, etc.), as appropriate.

Compliance and Enforcement key indicators

- Tribal codes are in place and they are effective.
- Tribal entities that manage waste operations are not self-regulated.
- A tribal enforcement program is in place and effective (including tribal laws and a court system that understands and appreciates waste issues).